The A. F. of L. Weekly News Service gives news notes and editorial interpretations of matters affecting labor organization in the national, legislative, and judicial fields, and contains other information of benefit to the trade union movement.

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR
WEEKLY NEWS SERVICE

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YOUR UNION LABELS, CARDS AND BUTTONS INSURE YOUR JOBS

WHOLE NO. 1889 | WILLIAM GREEN, President | WASHINGTON, D. C., TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 1946 | GEORGE MEANY, Secretary-Treasurer | VOL. 36, NO. 48

LABOR, USA

The twenty-first edition of the American Federationist of the Air, broadcast on the "Labor, USA" program over the American Broadcasting Company network, included the following outstanding feature articles to supplement the news:

The Coal Crisis

By BORIS SHISHKIN
AFL Economist

The mining of bituminous coal in the United States has stopped, although no strike has been called. The miners have individually and voluntarily refused to work without a contract prescribing and safeguarding the standards of their employment, in accordance with their long-established tradition.

The responsibility for this halt in coal mining which vitally affects every industry and every family in the nation rests squarely upon the government. It is the result of a calculated and deliberate imposition of arbitrary compulsion upon a group of American workers who are required to do the toughest and dirtiest job in the nation's industry. For such work their perennial reward has been poverty, insecurity, accident and sudden death.

I am not free to discuss the merits of the issues involved in the coal crisis. The War Labor Disputes Act denies to me and to you and to any other person the right of free speech regarding a work stoppage in a plant or mine seized and operated by the Government. It imposes a criminal penalty upon anyone who utters words that may be interpreted as an encouragement to workers who refuse to subject themselves to involuntary servitude.

I will tell you, however, some of the facts at the very heart of the coal problem. The scheduled workweek in all the mines calls for 54 hours a week, or nine hours a day every day of the week except Sunday. The average miner goes down in the shaft when it is still dark and comes out of the mine after nightfall.

While working underground he is in constant danger, not only to his health, but also his life. But even if he escapes such hazards, his strength is sapped and his life shortened because he works in the dark without fresh air, inhaling dangerous gasses and literally eating coal dust. He can see sunshine only on Sundays. But the sun does not always shine on Sundays.

The labor cost per ton of coal is about $2. The price of coal mined and delivered to the railroad yard averages $3.75 a ton. The retail price for the same ton of soft coal paid by the average American family this fall was over $12. So you see, the coal miner gets only about one-sixth, or 17 percent, of what you pay for your coal.

The average hourly straight-time pay of the coal miner is $1.18¾ cents an hour. The comparable base pay in automobile manufacturing today is $1.35 an hour for lighter and much less dangerous work.

Coal mining is a sick industry. Its economic problem is a chronic one. It exists not only in America but in every other nation where coal is mined. England and France and Belgium have recurring coal crises, too.

We will never solve the coal crisis by the unrealistic method of trying to place the blame on any particular individual or union. Not a single ton of coal can be mined by bayonets or court injunctions. We have to dig deeper than that for the basic solution. We have to establish conditions which will give the coal miners, the industry and the nation's consumers industrial peace and economic security.

The High Cost of Giving

By BERNIECE HEFFNER
Secretary-Treasurer of the Government Employes

With prices still going up and the cost of living continuing to mount, the hard-pressed wage earners of the nation are now confronted with a new problem—the high cost of giving.

Never before have the prices of Christmas gifts been set so wickedly high. Anyone who has tried to do some early Christmas shopping, as I have done, will be able to confirm that statement from personal experiences.

Especially is this situation true with regard to gifts for the children. Good quality clothing for kids is too expensive for most budgets—and low-priced clothes have disappeared from the store shelves. Toys have also felt the effects of inflation. It takes a good-sized chunk out of a week's pay to buy a doll. As for a toy train for junior, it's almost necessary to float a railroad loan to purchase one.

New people are naturally inclined to be generous at Christmas time. Even ordinarily careful shoppers don't like to look stingy when it comes to gifts for those they love. The usual tide of holiday buying at exorbitant prices is bound to become part of an inflationary sweep which will affect the cost of everything all of us need in our daily lives.

So you will be doing yourself and the entire country a favor if you don't buy luxury gifts this year. Competitive bidding for scarce articles will only push prices higher. I am not advocating a buyers' strike—but I do think it will be wise to buy only useful and economical presents this year.

And I might add that it will pay you to look for the union label before you buy. The union label guarantees that the article is made in America by skilled workers under decent and sanitary conditions.

There is one gift that is always appreciated and which has not gone up in price, a gift which will increase in value as the years go by. I refer to United States Savings Bonds. That kind of giving does not add to the cost of living.

False Economy

By FRANK FENTON
AFL National Organization Director

The Department of Labor announced the other day that forty men will have to be dropped from the staff of the United States Conciliation Service before the end of the year for economy reasons.

This is one of the worst examples of false economy in the Government service which has ever come to my attention and I am certain that the American people will agree with me.

At this moment, the nation faces a period of serious labor unrest. The reasons for it are obvious. When prices in the necessities of life keep going up, workers are forced to demand higher wages. It is not my purpose here to argue the merits of the disputes which are looming between labor and management in many fields. I merely want to emphasize that such differences are bound to arise unless conditions change suddenly in the months ahead.

The American Federation of Labor believes that disputes over wages and other labor-management problems can and should be settled by collective bargaining without resort to strikes. But frequently collective bargaining is thwarted and cannot even begin to operate for various reasons—including the heat normally generated by a dispute. That is where the Conciliation Service steps in.

As a neutral party, with the prestige of the United States Government behind him, the Department of Labor conciliator can almost always prevail upon the employer and the union representatives to sit down together and listen to reason. The Conciliation Service has a magnificent record in avoiding strikes. It also has a great record in bringing about prompt settlement of strikes that otherwise might have become seriously prolonged.

Under these circumstances, it becomes evident that to cripple the staff of the Conciliation Service at this time would be a tragic mistake.

As a member of the labor-management advisory committee to the Conciliation Service, I have consistently urged that the number of conciliators be increased and that their standards be improved so that the highest type of men and women can be attracted to those vitally important jobs.

It is high time that Congress stopped treating the Department of Labor as a step-child and provided ample funds for its efficient operation. Then the nation would be far better equipped to establish and to preserve industrial peace.

Teamwork of Labor-Management Chief Key to Problems, Meany Warns

New York City—An urgent appeal to American building workers to press consistently for tranquil labor-management relati and to struggle equally toward teamwork in the construction field was sounded here by George Meany, Secretary-Treasurer of the American Federation of Labor.

Reviewing the long struggle of American labor to establish its right to strike in given situations where it felt such action was justified, Mr. Meany told the group:

"Let us remember we have been talking about free enterprise, about a return to an economy free from Government interference, and about the rights of management to manage, of investors to a reasonable profit—in short, we have been talking about the free American way of life.

"I submit that there can be no free enterprise for the owners and managers of industry if freedom is denied to the workers. And the basic foundation of free society, insofar as the worker is concerned, is the right not to work for the profit of another if for any reason satisfactory to himself he does not care to work.

Elaborating upon this viewpoint, Mr. Meany declared:

"It is right for an individual not to give his labor to another closely parallels the right of an individual not to buy from another, not to enter into business if, for any reason at all, he does not desire to enter it.

"Labor firmly believed that the only effective trade union is a free trade union. That has been the case in other lands in Hitler's Germany, Mussolini's Italy and in Soviet Russia, and we want no part of that type of trade unionism. Experience has shown that the American system is free employers and free labor, with all the faults there may be in that system, brings better results for those who toil than does any other.

"The American worker today is, without question, the best paid, the best clothed and the best housed worker in the world." The children of American workers have greater educational opportunities than do the children of any other workers in any other country on earth. The wives and families of our workers have greater comforts and opportunities for social and cultural development than the families of the workers in any other land."

Citing contemptuous comments upon the American system of production, as expressed by leaders of nations headed by dictators, Mr. Meany told his audience:

"The war proved the efficiency of the American free enterprise system without enslaving labor, without giving away our cherished rights and liberties.

"American industry, in cooperation with American labor, outproduced and outfought the Nazis under Hitler, Mussolini and the Japanese war lords. Thus the American system, which has proved itself best from the viewpoint of wage earners in peacetime, likewise proved the best system for the defense of our national sovereignty during the most terrible war of all time.

"Labor's faith in the future of America is based on the firm belief that what has been accomplished in the past could only have been achieved under a system which recognizes the dignity and freedom of the individual.

"What has been achieved in perhaps best summed up by an advertisement which appeared recently in one of our leading periodicals. This advertisement, by the New York Stock Exchange, referring to what it called the 'Miracle of Production in America,' makes this statement—'America, with only 6% of the world's population, produces 25 percent of the world's goods and possesses 50 percent of the world's wealth.'

In a final word of caution, Mr. Meany added:

"In the months and years immediately ahead you see the organized workers of America engaged in a struggle to preserve certain rights which they feel are basic and fundamental to continue resistance to our free trade union structure, keep in mind that the major difference between our philosophy of government and that which prevails in totalitarian countries lies in the freedom of the individual. Remember, if you will, that there never has been a free trade union where a dictatorship existed, nor a dictatorship existed where there were free trade unions."

Truman Moves for Purge of Reds From U.S. Agencies

Washington, D. C.—A special board to study the Government's methods for screening staff of the executive branch and designed to purge Government jobs of Communists, was set up here by President Truman.

This action followed repeated requests by labor and veterans' unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor that such a commission be created to "bar the pink" pussyfooters from Government employment.

The commission, an interagency group, was instructed to draw up recommendations for any legislation thought necessary to keep disloyal and subversive persons out of the Civil Service.

A similar investigative body was set up during the war by the Civil Service Commission. The investigations of the Civil Service subcommittee which reported that the country's security was not threatened by the alleged presence of "questioned loyalty" on the Federal payroll.

The committee, in public hearings, had been particularly critical of the "Communist tendencies" of a group of State Department employes. It urged a special commission to unify security and investigation work now carried on by the various agencies, and funds to permit fingerprinting of all Government jobholders.

These recommendations of the House group should be considered by the new commission, President Truman directed today.

Under the Executive Order signed by Mr. Truman, the new commission will determine standards for judging loyalty of the employes and applicants for Federal employment, and study ways and means for removing or disqualifying from employment "any disloyal or subversive person."

The commission is to be made up of one representative each of the Justice, State, Treasury and War Departments and of the Civil Service Commission. The Justice Department representative will serve as chairman. All members will serve without compensation, and the commission will go out of existence when it submits its report to the President by next February 1.

AFL Meat Workers Accept Increase

Chicago—Spokesmen for the AFL Meat Workers Union have accepted a general wage increase of 11 1/2 cents per hour for approximately 65,000 workers throughout the country by Armour and Swift, the two largest packers, a union official said.

Earl Jimerson, president of the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen of North America, which represents 165,000 workers, announced signing of a new three-year contract with Armour and Swift awaited ratification by the rank-and-file members of the union's locals now meeting here.

Patrick A. Gorman, union secretary-treasurer, said the signing of a contract with these two companies, after 15 weeks of negotiations, would pave the way for immediate negotiations of agreements with Wilson, Cudahy and Morrell, the other three "Big Five" packers. The union has approximately 65,000 members in the five plants.

16,662,355 RESIDING IN U. S. GERMAN ZONE

Berlin.—The recent census released by the Statistical Section has reported that the zone in Germany numbered 16,662,355 persons, or 21.8 percent more than the census figures released in 1939, the American military government operations in 1939.

CITY FAMILY'S COSTS CLIMB

Washington, D. C.—The Bureau of Labor Statistics has reported that the average city family of moderate means has to pay for 605 percent more for goods and services in mid-October than the same goods and services cost in mid-August of 1939. At the same time, the consumers' price index was 15.1 percent over its position a year ago and 45.4 percent higher than the 1935-39 average.

Attention Editors!

In view of the holiday weekend, there will be no issue of the usual Friday supplement to the Weekly News Service of the American Federation of Labor this week. The regular supplement will be resumed December 6.

Prices Climb 3.8% Faster Than Pay

Washington, D. C.—Prices climbed 3.8 percent faster than earnings in the last year, the Labor Department reported.

It said that consumer prices increased 29 percent between October 15 and October 15, 1946. This made the rise for a 12-month period 15.1 percent, and brought purchasing power of a dollar down to 67.9 in terms of its January, 1941, value.

Weekly earnings averaged $46.53 in all manufacturing and average hourly earnings were $1.13 in October, for a yearly increase of 11.5 percent, above October, 1945. This take-home pay was still $1.50 a week below the wartime peak reached in January, 1945, but the average workweek also was 3.3 hours lower, down from the same date.

Weekly earnings last month were 72 percent and hourly earnings 65 percent above January, 1941—base date for the wartime Little Steel, or 15 percent, above October, 1945. This rise was well above the 33 1/3 percent ceiling formula used to stabilize wages and prices.

Soft coal miners' weekly earnings dropped in October to $61 per week and working hours were down one hour to 41.6 hours, a record higher than the 1935-39 average.

UMW Challenges Injunction At Hearing In Federal Court

Hines Sees Krug Holding Responsibility In Cutting Off Nation's Soft Coal Supply

Washington, D. C.—Full responsibility for the stoppage in the bituminous coal industry, due to the absence of a contract, rests on the shoulders of Interior Secretary Krug as coal administrator, Lewis N. Hines, AFL legislative representative, told the Nation in an address over the Columbia Broadcasting System.

"His refusal to honor the terms of a contract he negotiated with the United Mine Workers, as well as his desire to follow a course now widely applauded by every exploiter of labor and every union-hating employer in the country, has completely halted the production of bituminous coal," Mr. Hines declared.

"If the Government assumes responsibility for any industry, Mr. Hines explained, it transfers its activities from the political to the economic field, and has the same responsibilities and duties as any other employer. As an employer, such Government agency must strive for peace in its relations with its employes. Any agency, no matter how well intentioned, which is unwilling to accept responsibility for the settlement of disputes with its employes, is merely providing a cloak for arbitrary denial of rights of workers. He declared:

"Administrator Krug could not escape responsibility for the mine disputes by refusing to work without a contract. Nor can we call that practice unreasonable or irresponsible. Instead of attempting to meet the consequences of his own policy, he persuades the Administration to seek special privileges and secure the aid denied other employers under similar conditions. He asked a court of equity to provide relief for the situation resulting from his own actions."

But court injunctions, or sections of the Norris-LaGuardia Act, Mr. Hines warned, "will not produce coal, but, on the other hand, will add only insult to injury and set a pattern that may harrass the organized labor movement for a long time."

Citing the war record of the members of the United Mine Workers, Mr. Hines declared:

"Soldiers with bayonets will be required to break the backbone of the UMW with chagrin and dismay, especially in view of their enviable record of service to the Nation in the last war when 162,137 carried bayonets in defense of their country; when 3,548 of them made the supreme sacrifice and 10,125 were wounded in line of duty. It might be added that they bought $175,000,000 of War Bonds and contributed another $5,000,000 to the welfare agencies.

"The bituminous coal operators are not without blame for the present crisis. Their stubborn refusal to accord decent rates of wages and safe working conditions brought about Government seizure of the mines."

Farmers and Industrial Workers Both Interdependent, Shishkin Says

Des Moines, Iowa.—Farm prosperity depends largely upon industrial production and full employment keep up the high level of income for wage earners and farmers alike.

This is the message presented to the Farm Bureau Convention meeting by Boris Shishkin, Washington, D. C., economist, and research director of the American Federation of Labor. It was the first appearance of a union labor representative before this farm audience.

Mr. Shishkin sounded a firm warning that already there are signs of reduced factory payrolls resulting from a drop in overtime, down-grading of job classifications and curtailed production in some factories.

"Farmers and workers are in this together," the speaker declared. "Only through mutual understanding, interchange of information and mutual cooperation can we avoid pitfalls both groups be assured of future economic security and an opportunity to preserve their freedom.

"Consumer expenditures determine production. The bulk of consumer expenditures flow from wages and are derivd from labor. This is why the buying power of wages must be maintained at a high level.

"Between 1929 and 1932, income of industrial workers was cut more than half; cash receipts for marketing of farm products followed suit. In the next five years industrial workers income registered a steady rise.

"Cash receipts of farmers rose in close and direct proportions. The drop in farm income in 1937-38 was again closely paralleled by farmers' cash receipts. The same relation has been established since.

Discussing the over-all picture, Mr. Shishkin included a review of labor developments during the years, when some of the problems confronting labor and management were highly important to all segments of American life.

Mr. Shishkin emphasized particularly that strikes, slowdowns and work stoppages hurt both management and labor. That is in most disputes there is a real issue involved.

He further economists pointed out that management, in most cases, has followed the policy of meeting around the table with labor only when a strike threat is imposed, but that in plants where regular monthly meetings are held there is friendly relationship and little trouble.

Mr. Shishkin termed coal mining as "the heaviest and dirtiest work" of all, and said the hourly rate of pay of $1.18¾ and $1.25 an hour compared with $1.35 an hour at present for automobile workers.

Factory Hiring Rate Tops Prewar Level

Washington, D. C.—The factory hiring rate in September continued to exceed the prewar demand, it was disclosed after a survey by the Labor Department.

The factory accession rate was reported by the flour and feed milling products industry, where a rate of 108 per 1,000 reflected the change-over to the reanufacture of white flour as well as increased orders for flour.

Separation rates also showed slight labor market characteristics. For every 1,000 employes on the payrolls, 63 quit, 4 were discharged, 9 were laid off and 2 were separated for other reasons, according to reports. The anthracite and bituminous coal mining remained substantially below those in the manufacturing industry.

Lumber and furniture continued to have the highest rates of the war. At 92 per 1,000, respectively, tended to keep employment from rising. High factory frequency rates are typical of both groups.

Proportionately more women than men quit factory jobs, while layoffs and discharges continued lower for women than for men. Although the quit rate for women was considerably higher than for men in nondurable goods industries, in the durable goods component the rates were closer: 58 per 1,000 women and 61 per 1,000 men.

49 IN CONGRESS URGE WIDER QUOTAS IN U. S.

New York City.—Announcement was made by the Jewish Labor Committee that 49 members of Congress, including 7 U. S. Senators, have endorsed the unanimous decision reached at the recent convention of the American Federation of Labor, urging immediate entry into the United States of immigrants equal in number to the unused quotas of the war years.

Building Suppliers Soon To Be Able To Meet Demands

New York City—Supply of building materials will equal demand "early in 1947," Miller McClintock, Yale economist and director of the Construction Research Institute, predicted at a conference sponsored by the National Industrial Conference Board here.

Mr. Rogers noted, however, that despite increased production of materials, "we are not in a golden age." He said the nation's building industry, he said, is turning out more construction timber now than the home building program calls for.

AFL LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM IS SPED IN MINNESOTA

Minneapolis.—Officials of the Minnesota Federation of Labor are quick to place their legislative program before the 1947 session of the legislature.

Already they have sent each new senator and representative a letter outlining certain changes they would like to see in the strike-notice provisions of the state's labor law.

This letter will be followed by others dealing with taxes, workmen's compensation, the status of government employes and the status of labor in the community. By the time the legislature convenes in January its members will have full information about the main points of the AFL legislative program.

Courtroom Is Packed As Spectators Await Mine Strike Decision

Washington, D. C.—Before a packed Federal courtroom, with the eyes of the entire nation intent on the outcome, attorneys for the United Mine Workers Union challenged the Government's legal right to force the union by injunction to stop the coal strike.

The proceedings at the opening hearing before Federal Judge Goldsborough were brief and inconclusive. The Judge, himself, engaged in a rambling dissertation on the case and then postponed trial of the issues until November 27.

At that time, sitting with an "advisory jury," Judge Goldsborough will decide:

1—Whether the injunction he issued against the UMW President John L. Lewis to withdraw his formal notice on November 15 that the union's contract with the Interior Department had been terminated, was legal. The union contends the Norris-La Guardia Act forbids such injunctions in labor disputes.

2—Whether Mr. Lewis and other union officials are guilty of contempt of court for failing to heed the injunction. Defense for the union indicated the defense would be that the union officials did nothing to give effect to the cancellation of the contract and that there is no grounds, therefore, for the contempt citation. Another defense argument may be that a restraining order cannot require a defendant to take affirmative action.

3—If the court upholds the legality of the original, temporary injunction, it will then have to be decided whether the injunction should be made permanent.

Attorneys for the Government and for the union got short shrift from Judge Goldsborough at the opening hearing. Once the Judge realized that the union intended to contest the legality of the entire proceedings, he postponed further argument until the November 27 trial. But the Judge did not stop there. He launched into a speech of his own,

Summarizing the position of both sides, he said the Government says the defendants have not obeyed the restraining order while the defendants maintain categorically that the, have done everything in the termination of the Krug-Lewis contract.

"That is equivalent to saying they have not done what the court commanded," he added, "but, then they say they do not have to obey the restraining order as it is not legal."

The Judge remarked that there seems to be no legal precedent for the current proceedings.

"I don't think a situation like this has ever confronted society before, or confronted a court before—I never have, of one," he said.

Continuing, Judge Goldsborough discussed the effects of the situation on the nation, on the union and on labor in general. He even threw in a few remarks about capitalism and labor and the possibility that Congress may proceed to enact legislation "that will set labor back many years."

Then, half to himself and half to the court, the Judge concluded his remarks by saying:

"I do not know whether I was justified in making that statement. It was extrajudicial."

Meanwhile, the coal mining stoppage throughout the nation remained 100 percent effective. Without receiving any orders from the union, without a single picket line around any coal pit, the 400,000 bituminous miners voluntarily stayed away from their jobs in a demonstration unparalleled in labor history.

Newspaper reporters, interviewing coal miners and their families in the coal regions, wrote stories to the effect that the miners are determined to stay through with their fight for a better contract and that any attempt by the Government to jail Mr. Lewis or the fine the union will only intensify their determination to stay out.

Throughout the nation, coal conservation orders were put into effect by Federal, State and local officials. It was estimated that the supply of coal above ground would be sufficient to cover the essential needs for only a few more than 30 days.

However, many manufacturing enterprises, especially the steel mills, which are huge consumers of coal, and the railroads, immediately started cutting back on their operations and, as a result, many thousands of workers were forced into temporary idleness.

It was the consensus in Washington that, barring some sudden move to break the deadlock on the part of the Government or the union, the legal proceedings undertaken by the Department of Justice will drag out for a long time. Meanwhile, no coal was in prospect of being mined.